An "IDEA" for Elementary Principals

By: Ann Richards

The Elementary Principal's Professional Development Cohort met with Don Washburn, Director of the Pilasco-Ross Special Education Regional Resource Center at OUSC to provide an update on special education. The Pilasco-Ross Special Education Regional Resource Center is a regional service agency serving children with disabilities in Pike, Lawrence, Scioto and Ross counties.

Washburn shared that disabled children make up 11% of the student population and 75-80% of school litigation is a result of special education issues. The purpose of this meeting was to inform principals of the changes in laws and to help them with specific questions and issues concerning special education.

Washburn explained that Public Law 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA), is based on six principals. The first is a free appropriate public education. The term "free appropriate public education" means that special education and related services are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, without charge. The education must meet the standards of the state educational agency. These services include an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school education and are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required by law. He summarized Free Appropriate Public Education, or FAPE as: Free - no cost to parents; Appropriate - suited to the individual needs of the child, Public - provided by, or paid for by, the public school system; Education (including extracurricular activities) - what this law is all about!

The second principle addressed was appropriate evaluation. Appropriate evaluation should not subject a child to unnecessary tests and assessments. A variety of instruments and procedures should be used to gather information to enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum or, for preschool children, to participate in appropriate activities.

An "individualized education program" or "IEP", is a written statement that should be prepared for each child with a disability. The IEP

See "IDEA" on pg. 2
“IDEA”, continued from pg. 1

should be developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with state standards. Children should be placed in the least restrictive environment. The presumption is that children with disabilities are most appropriately educated with their nondisabled peers and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Parents and students can and should be encouraged to participate in the decision making process. Congress states that “strengthening the role of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home.” Parents can participate by giving consent for evaluation and initial placement of their child, helping design the IEP, and helping the school understand the child. Students can participate by helping to design the IEP and expressing preferences and interests, particularly during transition planning.

During the process, procedural safeguards are needed. Safeguards are used to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected. Students with disabilities and their parents are provided with the information they need to make decisions, and that procedures and mechanisms are in place to resolve disagreements between parties.

At the end of his presentation, Washburn addressed individual questions. He provided answers and insight about 504 plans, proficiency tests, professional exemptions, and transition statements for older students. The meeting was beneficial to all who attended and provided an update of legislation related to special education.

Ohio University Leadership Project and OASSA Working Together!
by Dennis DeCamp

This year the Ohio University Leadership Project and Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators (OASSA) Zone 1 members partnered their resources for two meetings. It has been a profitable collaboration of two organizations that seek to better the knowledge and understand the changing educational arena of administrators in our area.

On May 5th, Mr. Jim Harbuck, Associate Executive Director of OASSA spoke to a group of twenty-five secondary administrators concerning keys to Effective Parent/Student Handbooks. Mr. Harbuck also shared information on the status of Senate Bill 77, which effects administrative evaluating and Senate Bill 190, which changes STRS benefits. He also shared a historical perspective and distributed several examples of drug testing policies adopted throughout the state.

In the fall, Steve Raines, Executive Director of OASSA spoke to the group at Ohio University Southern Campus regarding Senate Bill 1 and how it would and is effecting the way we conduct disciplinary business in our schools. Both meetings proved to be an enlightening time for all who attended.

Dennis DeCamp, Zone 1 representative of the Board of Directors of OASSA and Dr. William Larson, work collaboratively in this successful venture. Our hope is to continue this partnership next year to keep our administrative forces prepared in this ever-changing climate of education.

Dennis DeCamp is the principal at Portsmouth East Middle/High School and a participant in the Principal’s Professional Development Program.

Elementary principals Jerry Bentley, Bill Nichols, and Gary Heimbach prepare questions for the speaker.
“Hire Hard, Manage Easy”  
by Charles Taylor

Nearly 30 participants from the Secondary Principal’s Professional Development Program met in early March to focus on the topic of effective personnel selection. Gary Pack was presenter for the session. Mr. Pack, a former manager of training and development at Meade Paper Company, and currently a consultant in the area of human resource development and leadership, spoke on the topic “Hire Hard, Manage Easy.”

Emphasizing the importance of planning and preparation for the selection process, Mr. Pack stressed the point that this “up front” effort saves immense time, energy, frustration, and costs which often result from employment of individuals who are not successful.

An important part of this planning is to know your own organizational culture, customs, values and behavior styles so that new employees can be matched to “fit” the group. The screening process then becomes one of ascertaining the qualities of the candidates. Mr. Pack indicated that the cultural tendencies and behavioral qualities of potential employees are as important as the skills they possess. He recommended the use of some assessment instruments to determine behavioral tendencies. A good rule of thumb in employment is that an individual’s past performance is the best predictor of future performance. So thoroughly check out the employment history of candidates.

Other tips for selection included the identification of the best people in one’s organization and then attempting to employ people like them. He also indicated that it is good to “look close to home” for employees and that employment of family members, sometimes considered taboo, can be a great way to build strong organizational culture. In this context, current employees can be the best recruiters.

Noting that “you can’t hire people who don’t apply”, Mr. Pack pointed out that employers have to take initiatives in finding high quality candidates for positions. It is not sufficient to simply select from those who have applied.

He also suggested to principals that the best way to rate a candidate is to watch them at work. If possible, it is very helpful to have applicants participate in some kind of work situation, or simulation, which enables you to observe them demonstrating their skills. This is better than having to rely solely on references describing their performance.

Mr. Pack wrapped up the session by discussing the use of instruments which help identify behavioral tendencies of individuals. The profile which is developed from these instruments can help determine how well the individual’s behavioral qualities will “fit” within the organization. The better the fit, the better the hire.

Charles Taylor is a faculty member of Ohio University and a coordinator for the Rural Principal Preparation Program.
OhioReads Program
Elementary Principal’s Professional Development

by Tammy Brust

Several elementary administrators, representing various central and southern Ohio schools, met on Thursday, December 9, 1999 at Ohio University-Chillicothe. This was the first meeting of the OUC Elementary Principal’s Professional Development Cohort. The focus of this seminar was to allow participants to learn more about the OhioReads Program through a presentation and discussion group with its Executive Director, Holly Harris-Bane, who served as the main speaker for the event.

OhioReads is Governor Taft’s education initiative to improve the reading skills of Ohio’s kindergarten through fourth grade students. The initiative has three major components: $40 million in Classroom Reading Grants, $10 million in Community Reading Grants, and a call for 20,000 volunteer reading tutors.

Bane explained how the education initiative, begun by Governor Taft, resulted in the formation of the OhioReads Program. She focused on how the OhioReads program could affect elementary schools through an influx of volunteers from the community and various business partnerships. The role of these volunteers is to serve as reading tutors who will support the literacy efforts already in place at individual schools. She further emphasized the purpose of the program was to extend or compliment regular classroom curriculum, not replace any component of it.

Bane shared with the group of principals the goals and initiatives of the program and what has been done to reach these goals so far. She shared the successes the program has experienced as well as the areas they are working on to better serve schools and students. She spent time answering questions from program participants in the group setting and met with individuals who had specific questions after the main session.

Bane briefly reviewed the procedures for awarding the grants. She encouraged those who did not receive monies this year to participate in the program and utilize some of the other funding that is available. If further information about the program is desired, she referred participants to the web page: www.ohioreads.org

This seminar was the first in a series designed to provide professional, “hands-on” growth opportunities for elementary principals in the Chillicothe area. The seminars provide a unique occasion for elementary administrators to determine the focus of professional development opportunities concerning concerns and issues that are timely and relevant to the group. Participants were asked to identify topics and challenges they found in the elementary principalship. Many of these topics were then addressed at later seminars.

In April, Holly Harris-Bane met with the Southern Campus Cohort of elementary administrators to present a similar program. A special thanks for the time, effort, and travel of Ms. Bane to present this valuable information to our participants.

Tammy Brust is the principal at Darby Elementary School in the Westfall Local School District and a participant in the OUC Elementary Principal’s Professional Development Program.

Holly Harris-Bane, Executive Director of OhioReads, meets with Sharon Branon and Lisa Naylor to answer specific questions.
Data Warehousing: Data Driven Decision-Making

Superintendent Professional Development Program

Bloom-Vernon Local School District superintendent, Paul White, has a vision of meeting continuous improvement demands through data-driven decision-making. He is looking at data warehousing as a means to manage all the data and to increase the value of available data.

White shared the findings of a feasibility study with a group of educators at South Webster High School several months ago and again with the superintendent professional development group at their April meeting.

What is data-driven decision making and data warehousing? Data-driven decision making, defined by Kongshem, associate editor of Electronic School, is “a strategy that aims to give all stakeholders access to easy-to-use computing tools that can help them analyze, make sense of, and act on information about every student and every facet of the district’s operations.” Data warehouses are “vast repositories of information that import, standardize, and integrate data from district operational systems – the databases and computer systems used for day-to-day operations (Kongshem, 1999).” Data is gathered in one place and provides administrators the opportunity to see relationships between data elements that would otherwise remain hidden or inaccessible in mountains of unstructured and disconnected facts.

As school districts are faced with mandates of higher test scores and a short supply of resources, White gave several options. The first is to remain where you are and meet the status quo. The second is to work hard relying on experience and intuition that will work for awhile or, three, develop new tools. These new tools should be designed to squeeze more from existing assets.

White suggests “you can’t manage what you can’t measure” and the idea of a data warehouse is to customize a system that will pull information from various existing sources into one place. This type of system will need to be designed specifically with the user in mind and cannot be simply purchased and installed.

Navix Corporation conducted a feasibility study for White and concluded that building a data warehouse is feasible if done in small, incremental steps. Things to be considered are state initiatives, commercial products (Learning Landscape, eScholar, Chancellery), standards (SIF, NCES, and EMIS/Poise), and costs.

White has suggested the next step is to partner with other districts to leverage available resources and influence. There are many questions that still need to be answered with pilot scenarios and more detailed analysis. Costs, timelines, and implementation may depend upon each organization, their culture and readiness to move into uncharted waters.

REMINDER
If you have moved or are planning a move in the near future, please let us know so we can update our mailing list.
Congratulations and Good Luck!
Since our last publication, Michael Beasecker has been appointed Executive Director for the Darke County Board of MR/DD. OULP wishes him the best as he begins his new position.

Congratulations on a Job Well Done!
OULP would like to extend congratulations to program participant Tonya Cooper. Tonya, treasurer of Pike County Joint Vocational School, was awarded a prestigious award for excellence in financial reporting. This honor is given to local institutions that publish a comprehensive annual financial report. Congratulations to Tonya and her staff for their outstanding efforts!

Treasurer’s Tid-Bits
Five-Year Forecasting: Ehove Career Center
by Dee Cramer
The Northwest Chapter of the Ohio Association of School Business Officials realized that their members were in need of help with the Five-Year Forecast. The Chapter officers addressed this need by providing, in conjunction with Ohio University Leadership Project, a two-day seminar, Five-Year Forecasting You Can Live With at the Ehove Career Center. Ernie Strawser and Stacy Overly provided the instruction at the seminar. Both men are Chief Financial Officers for their school districts and have developed a program to assist others with the completion of this report. This program was well received by the participants. A special thank you to both Ernie and Stacy for their commitment to professional excellence.

You are invited to attend a two-day session
“Professional Learning Communities at Work”
with Dr. Robert Eaker
June 14 & 15 • Ohio University Chillicothe Campus
The purpose of this seminar is to provide you with a means to:
• Enhance student achievement through a results orientation
• Build the foundation of a learning community with a mission, a vision, values, and goals
• Build consensus, communicate priorities, and work with “resisters”
• Replace teacher isolation with collaborative teams
• Engage staff in action research and collective search for best practices
Dr. Eaker’s session will focus on leadership behaviors that lead schools to become professional learning communities that place an emphasis on results. Such topics as collaboration and collective inquiry, standards and benchmarking, emphasizing learning rather than teaching, assessment, and continuous improvement will be addressed.
For more information or to RSVP, please phone the Leadership Project office at (740) 533-4579 or email us at boydr@ohio.edu
Sponsored by:
Ohio University Leadership Project and South Region School Improvement Team

Five-Year Forecasting You Can Live With will be offered in Pickerington on October 12 and 13.
One-day Update sessions for those who have taken the two-day Five-Year Forecasting Seminar will be held in August, September, and November at OUC.
Book Review:  
Getting Past No by William Ury

The purpose of this book is to offer tools to people in all levels of communications and negotiations by answering two questions: “How can you turn confrontation into cooperation?” and “How can you transform conflicts to be fought into problems to be solved?” In his previous book, “Getting to Yes”, Ury helped his readers find convincing and positive ways to bring their opponents to their side of the argument. In this book, he adjusts the focus from “win-win negotiations” to a more non-personal approach which puts the problems on the table independent of the people who are discussing them. Ury recognizes that sometimes disagreements can not be resolved only because the people involved in the negotiation process are too close to the problem and become emotional about the outcome.

Ury offers several strategies to individuals who desire to settle a difficult conflict. He encourages the reader to first look at their own involvement in the problem by learning how emotions can hinder the ability to consider options and alternatives. He describes preparation for negotiations as “mapping out the way to agreement.” By spending time determining the “interests” of each side as opposed to the stated “positions” one can often bring their opponent into agreement over common interests. Opponents are often caught off-guard by using the “Step to their side” strategy. When emotions or negative reactions are barriers to successful negotiations, Ury suggests the “go to the balcony” strategy which encourages the reader to take time to look at the overall situation, compose their thoughts and evaluate the tactics of their opponents. Other advice found in the book includes “building them a golden bridge” and “using power to educate”. These tactics offer suggestions for helping an opponent to compromise either by offering them something else they want or by educating them about the folly of their position and its ultimate demise.

In my position as a Personnel Manager, I used the “Getting Past No” strategies to conduct a pre-arbitration meeting with some Union representatives. I used many of the strategies and found that they had the effect which Ury describes. The opposition was caught off-guard when I opened the meeting with common goals. They became very positive and open about their “interests” which we were then able to address independent of their “position.” The meeting was successful with the exception that the Union maintained their decision to go to arbitration. Sometimes it really doesn’t matter what is negotiated when the opponent is determined to pursue their “Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement” (BATNA). Luckily my employer has a strong BATNA too and is confident the arbitration will result in a positive outcome.

William Ury’s “Getting Past No,” has had a lasting effect on the way I think about negotiations with the Union as well as my supervisors and co-workers. The strategies and techniques really do work in most situations and when they don’t work, the book offers advice on salvaging the failures.

Review provided by Elizabeth Murray. Murray is a member of the School Business Official’s Cohort and is employed as the Personnel and Business Manager for the Lawrence County MRDD.

Editor’s Excerpt

By: Ann Richards

Spring has sprung and change is in the air! This is the time of year when the school year begins to wind down and plans for next year are being made. The Leadership Project is also in the midst of planning for next year. The time has come to plan for the implementation of new programs and to determine the direction of existing ones. You are encouraged to take the time to attend the planning meeting of your professional development cohort and give your input for topics for the next school year.

As the school year ends, many of you will be accepting new positions and challenges for the next school year. We would appreciate it if you would let us know of your job changes so that we can keep our mailing list updated. This will assist our office in keeping you informed of plans and dates for next year’s professional development opportunities.

Take time to enjoy the spring season and experience the new life it can bring!
From the Director

Hi School Leaders!

Another school year is quickly coming to an end. The month of May is known as much for its proms, exams, report cards, graduations, and retirements as it is for its flowers and all the other signs of spring. May also represents a month in which the plans for another school year are being or at least beginning to be made. It has been my witness that the districts, buildings, and staff members that plan the most effectively during the spring and summer typically enjoy the "fruits of their efforts" during the following school year. There seems to be much sage advice in the old adage that "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail."

Professional development activities and for that matter other engagements in which you sharpen your "professional saw" represent a form of planning endeavors. After all, through professional development you can prepare for the future. For this reason, I encourage you to engage this summer and during the next school year in activities that will help you to be even better prepared for the future.

Planning for the future apparently is becoming more and more important for most organizations and individuals. There seems to be a growing uncertainty, probably related to all the exciting changes with the emergence of the technology age, regarding "what tomorrow will be all about." And, there is no better way to prepare for an uncertain tomorrow than to engage in meaningful and well-directed professional development. You are encouraged to think and work towards being "ahead of the curve."

Please contact me if there is any way the leadership project can help your district, school, or you to prepare for the future. That is our business and we are excited about the notion of contributing to your growth.

Until then,

Bill Larson

Ohio University Leadership Project
c/o Ohio University Southern Campus
1804 Liberty Avenue • Ironton, Ohio 45638

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit 34
Ironton, Ohio

Editorial Committee:
Robin Boyd
Bill Larson
Ann Richards